



“Bugs That Bug Us”

Springtime in the mountains is for the most part a beautiful time of the year. But have you noticed the little creatures that make their presence known? Whether you are sitting on your sofa watching television, standing on your deck, walking down your driveway, or walking through the woods, it seems as if we are being invaded by masses of two, four, six, and eight legged creatures. Sometimes you have to duck down to avoid being in the direct path of a bee, or swat at something that is crawling up your arm, or down your leg.

Do these little creatures have a purpose? Are they a form of intelligent Lilliputian life? Are they around us just to make an enjoyable picnic into a not so pleasant one?

Hopefully I will answer these questions about the bugs that bug us.

This spring it seems as if the colonies of black ants have been fierce. They seem to be everywhere! The Carpenter Ant (big black ant) lives in moist areas such as decaying stumps, wood piles, trees, and wooden foundations. They can be very destructive to your foundation if not found and destroyed early. Homeowners can treat with ‘ant and roach killer’ insecticide sprays or boric acid dust. If the condition of your wood frame becomes more fragile due to the ants eating away at the structure, it may be necessary to call a Pest Control company to locate the nest where thousands of these creatures may be living, and waiting too invade.

Ladybugs (also called lady birds and lady beetles) are small, oval-shaped winged insects. These shiny insects are usually red with black spots or black with red spots on the wing covers. The number of spots identifies the type of ladybug. Most ladybugs are less than

quarter inch long, and as ladybugs age, the color of the spots fade.

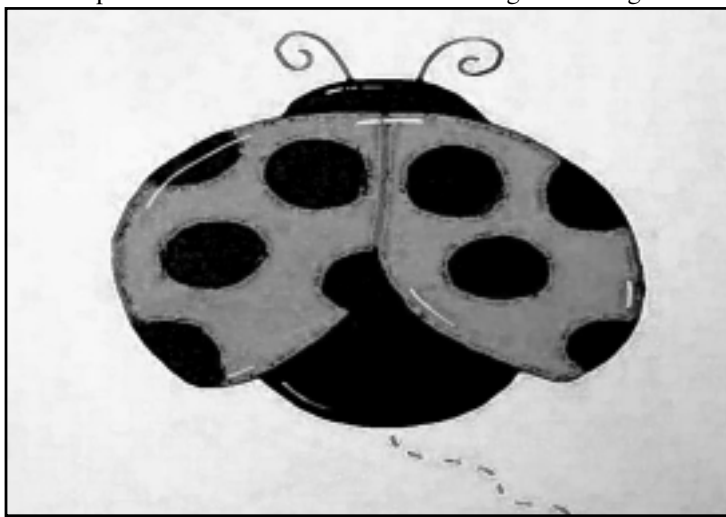
-Birds are the major predator of the ladybug. -Ladybugs will play dead when threatened.

These tiny predators are usually very welcome in gardens because ladybug larvae and adults eat aphids, mealy bugs, and mites. Ladybug larvae can eat about twenty-five aphids a day; adults can eat over fifty. There are about five thousand different species of ladybugs throughout the world. A common species is the two-spotted ladybug; it is orange red with one black spot on each wing cover. Did you know that four ladybugs were sent into space in 1999 on NASA’s space shuttle? This was done to see if aphids could get away from the ladybugs without being able to jump using gravity. Upon completion of the mission, it was determined that the ladybugs survived and did eat the aphids while in a microgravity environment. Ladybugs do very well in space!

Many people are afraid of spiders (Arachnophobia). This fear is partly due to myths and to the notoriety of harmful species such as the brown recluse spider (fiddle back), and the black widow. Although spiders are often unpopular, the venom of most species is not very toxic to humans, usually resulting in no more than a slight swelling, inflammation, or itching sensation. Most spiders’ fangs are too small or weak to puncture human skin. Spiders usually will not attempt to bite unless accidentally trapped against the skin or grasped, although some species actively guard their egg sacs or young. Spiders are beneficial predators that reduce pest populations (flies, crickets, mites, etc.) in and around homes, yards, and gardens.

“Daddy-longlegs are one of the most poisonous spiders but their fangs are too short to bite humans”.

Is this a myth or reality? Find out the answer to this question, and learn about snails, butterflies and moths in part two of “Bugs That Bug Us”.



Pictures of ladybugs completed by students of Scott M. Anna. Students who were afflicted with Alzheimer’s Disease.